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ABSTRACT

This essay presents an analysis of the work of a President's Commission on the University and Schools at Wayne State University, Michigan, to uncover some of the implicit versus explicit intentions of those involved in the work of the Commission. The Commission had been charged with formulating a policy statement to be used in guiding the development of one or two model public schools in Detroit. An opening section uses a story/parable to explore questions of who is most able to get at and communicate the truth about a situation suggesting that the "experts" often are not the most able people. Three sections discussing the Commission's work follow. The first presents the vision of the ideal school in a mission statement and specific principles of such a school. The second section presents the Commission's vision of the ideally prepared teacher articulated in a mission statement and 18 specific characteristics. The third section looks at the form developed for the collaborative relationship between the university and the school. This section contains the discussion of what the Commission's report means and what its real intent is. A coda section discusses the University president's role in the Commission's work. (JB)

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The Wayne State University President's Commission

on the

University and the Schools

by

David J. Magidson

Commission Chairman

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TEXT AND SUBTEXT

The Wayne State University President's Commission on the University and the Schools

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Commission Chairman

Edward De Bono in his now famous book called *The Uses of Lateral Thinking* uses a parable that goes something like this: Let's say (I think I remember this correctly) he says, that you are a water finder and you go into a town that has been experiencing a drought and which has already embarked upon a search for water. In the process of that search the people in the town have decided where the water they need is likely to be found, and they have been digging a hole to get to it. In fact, they have been digging this hole for a long time, and have not yet struck water. If you want to find out about the chances of finding water, to whom should you speak?

It is De Bono's contention that for certain the only people *not* to speak to are those currently involved in the project -- the experts. They have, he says, their careers, reputations, etc. tied up in the water being *exactly where they thought it was*. They are all in the process of digging their hole deeper. The politicians are suspect, as well, as they have spent the citizens' money in a bet (and a costly one at that) that, to quote Brigham Young, "This is the place."

Indeed, in this example we can see how an entire infrastructure will have developed around keeping at this hole in this spot, and there will be everything from job security to reputation to real belief offered as a reason that it is not yet time to abandon it. In fact, although new information may suggest that one block to the East or West *actually* lies water, the chances of changing the power structure, abandoning a lot of work, and setting off crazily in other directions are pretty small. Actually, since this is a water example and doesn't affect us in education, we can tell the truth: the chances are zero.

And so we come to the "search for the well" that will give universities and public school districts the "water" they need to keep our children from dying of thirst. But wait: this is about to become harder than we thought: there is not one well that everyone has their life into, there are *two*! What's more, the people at Well #1 *trained* the people at Well #2, people who left there deeply suspicious that the Well #1 diggers knew nothing. So there is an appearance of cooperation, but the reality is that each of these groups knows it has the "truth," and neither of them wants to give up control.

So, all the water searchers in our example look for a way out -- a Solomon-like solution. (There is a lot of baby dividing in the education/water business -- not to mention an equal or greater number of mixed metaphors.) Clearly the Well #1 people are not going to go to work directly at #2. #1 is, after all, a prototype well, and even though no water may have been found -- or may ever be found -- discoveries about the *process* of finding water are being made that can be applied to other wells in other cities, towns and villages. What would be the point of abandoning this very important work just to become "laborers" on one limited (and to tell the truth, conceptually flawed) well.

The Well #2 people, at the same time, have thinly veiled contempt for the dilettantes over at #1. These are people who have clearly abandoned the hope of ever finding real water, so now they make pronouncements about how to do it from their boondoggle, ivory tower at Well #1 without ever having found any themselves! Oh sure, sometimes they get an idea, come running over to #2 for a couple of weeks, poke around, get everybody's hopes up, slow down the real work, and then go back to their sinecures at #1. No self-respecting #2 person would go to work there.

So, a special commission is appointed and meets to decide how, in the interests of finding water (which is, after all, the whole idea, isn't it?) cooperation might be established. Representatives -- both workers and managers -- from both wells are on hand, as well as a couple of politicians who say they represent the people on whose behalf the search is taking place, and even a few actual town folk -- just to give a democratic cast to the whole thing.

And they begin to talk . . .

* * * * *

Perhaps this would be as good a time as any to get out of the well story and fully into public education-university cooperation. As we can see from extending what De Bono thought a harmless example, the forces arrayed against anything truly meaningful happening are considerable. Just as in the well story, it is clear that before anything can happen between the groups, a precondition will be that nothing, or at least nothing significant, will happen to endanger the existing groups. The status quo must at least *seem* to be safe.

Now in fairness it should be pointed out that this safety need is not completely inappropriate. It is only from security that we can avoid too much self-interest creeping in, and if one's job is at stake and this is one's only chance to invent a new one, a whole different set of factors is likely to creep in unless we prevent it.

This whole introduction is meant to do a three things: first to set up the parameters of a short discussion about Wayne State University's experience at Stage 1, talk -- which is the most critical stage of a complex cooperative effort, and to discuss the *process* components of beginning this cooperative effort, in particular. Second to say that with the process properly attended to it is possible to come to high-level conclusions, which we did at Wayne State University and which we present here in summary form. And third, to discuss the fact that these "talkers" (those who came together originally on an *ad hoc* basis, but who through this experience represent the yet to be dug Well #3) create, at least in this situation, a subtext for their report that must be decoded and acted upon, even as it is kept in the background to protect its creators.

Here, then, is some history, first from the Executive Summary of the report:

In December of 1991 the President's Commission on the University and the Schools was established at Wayne State University to formulate a policy statement providing broad guidance to the University and College of Education for the development of one or more model public schools in Detroit, teacher education as it occurs both within the College of Education and elsewhere in the University, and mobilization of the entire University in other ways to collaborate with public pre-K-12 schools. This report contains three mission statements and over sixty "ingredients" of effective action in these areas.

In the WSU associated school area, recommendations center around the concept of the community school which deals with a broad array of services, student needs, parent partnerships, community support, management styles, professional development, multi-cultural orientation, assessment of students, alternative educational paths, student program

design, technology in the classroom, structure, atmosphere, and continuous self-evaluation.

The teacher training section discusses knowledge in subject area, general competencies, teaching methods, technology, application of learning and special urban knowledge and skills. It also speaks to issues in teacher preparation including internships, mentor relationships, parent-teacher collaboration, teacher-community professional collaboration and management. It further examines additional desirable skills the university needs to impart such as communication, ability to create a learning environment, awareness of developmental factors, student assessment skills and the habit of self-reflection and continuous improvement. Further discussion centers around the College and what its responsibilities are including continuing teacher education, integration of the university community, the transmission of research discoveries, the provision of alternative certification and the creation of new knowledge through research.

The section dealing with other collaborations divides the process of collaboration from the collaboration as product. The process section talks about stake-holder involvement, community support, level of institutional commitment, goal setting, consensus building, communication and the replicability of the process. As to "collaboration as product," discussion centers around the partners, the framework (including ability to change, reward structures, resources, base of support, continuity, university student involvement and methods of communication), the diversity of the city and participants as co-learners.

Finally the report firmly notes the necessity for long-term commitment in the school area and the systematic approaching of issues having to do with the College of Education. The report is optimistic about WSU's ability to accomplish its tasks, but realistic about the amount of work and commitment involved.

It is almost less important what these recommendations were than that we were able to make them at all. The College of Education (Well #1) felt under fire. The Public Schools (Well #2) had their own political pressures to deal with and, in fact, had already rebuffed a set of earlier overtures from the University beginning a mildly acrimonious brouhaha in the press (some said *caused* by the press).

So, the President's Commission: eighteen people, including three faculty members from the College of Education and one Associate Dean; two K-12-interested faculty members from other University departments; an Assistant Superintendent of Detroit Public Schools appointed by the General Superintendent; a public school principal; a public school teacher (and recent graduate of the College of Education); the University's head of computing services (formerly an Education professor); an Assistant Dean from the College of Engineering; the head of Ambulatory Pediatrics from the School of Medicine; a parent

representing the area of the city in which the University is located; a full time law student (also a parent); the Director of the University's Center for Urban Studies and the Dean of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts (the author) who had been asked to chair the group. Serving as "staff" to the Commission was the President's special assistant for schools and a research professor from the College of Urban, Labor and Metropolitan Affairs who volunteered to help so she might observe the process of formation of a possible new public policy from its beginning in a disparate group with many interests to its inception.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the group was suspicious at the outset. There were many agendas extant, and as many hidden. All of the "well" problems were around, plus a few others, not the least of which was that this was a command performance for the university's President and those employed at WSU wanted to do well. Further complicating his role, some slightly abrasive language had been used in public by the President and in the previously mentioned newspaper imbroglio the impression had been left that he did not think highly of the schools and that the university should "manage" some of them because of the incompetence shown by the current management -- whose cooperation was probably going to be necessary. A two-day conference had then been convened with people from Pueblo, Colorado, Chelsea Massachusetts and other "cooperators" which ameliorated bad feelings slightly but also added to the impression of WSU as a juggernaut with a new mission.

Further muddying the picture for the community was a now defunct experiment that had been begun out of the same impulses and by the same parties (WSU and DPS) in September of 1976 and which had become highly politicized, finally closing its doors after a failure to renew its working agreement in 1989, or so.

This is all presented here because if the first step in a collaboration or any other cooperative effort is the planning stage, for a variety of reasons, from historical circumstance to the *ad hoc* nature of this group's makeup, all the problems that have to be solved in a venture like this before it can proceed were crystallized.

The public schools, for example, had nothing to gain by entering any agreement. If the result was a failure, they would have violated the public's trust by turning over their responsibilities to someone else. If things turned out the same, what need would there have been to further fragment an already fragmented system and, in the worst case, if it

became a success, why hadn't it been done already? This came very close to being a lose-lose situation for them.

The College of Education similarly seemed to have nothing to gain. It was made clear that this was not to be a laboratory school or a research school but an ordinary school. While the College of Education faculty would continue to be judged on university criteria for teaching, research and service (usually a 40%-40%-20% breakdown), this could be seen as service and for it to work a great deal of effort would have to go into the category with the least reward. Additionally, the portion of the charge asking the group to look at how we educated our teachers was a clear challenge to the current organization of the College. The safety factor switch felt "turned off" to many.

What had to happen next was no big discovery: trust and a working method had to be invented so that this disparate group could move from square one, and if possible the trust should come from the work.

In order that everyone at least have access to the same knowledge and background, thick packets of readings were produced four times, once before an initial organizational meeting and then again before each of three major, 12 1/2 hour meetings centering around the three areas of inquiry noted above. These materials were distributed to all Commission members in advance with the expectation that they would be read. Then, on the day of the meeting, the morning, from 9:00-12:00, was given over to guest resources who further discussed "background" with the Commission. Sometimes highly volatile situations were created, sometimes the sessions were informative, but whatever happened, *by noon everyone in the room from all the disparate backgrounds they represented were, as the musicians say, on the same page.* This emphatically does not mean all agreed -- only that everyone now knew they had all been exposed to the same material in the same way, and it was up to the group to work out its differences. (Actually, the more controversial the guest, the more *quickly* the definition of the group for that day was made.)

The effect of all of this -- through some fairly rocky discussion sessions -- was to create a planning group whose members began to trust one another. Reactions that were opposite were truthfully laid out, and although everyone did not agree on everything, the ability to demand a reaction often resulted in agreement in principle in areas that hitherto seemed impossible. More important, as will be seen later, it allowed for a *surface text* to be created

with full knowledge that there was a *subtext* which might have several implementation strategies. More about that later.

So from this process grew the report that came to conclusions mentioned earlier. These conclusions without their narrative support have been reproduced below the mission statements for each area, as noted. They form what the Commission judges to be the cornerstone work necessary in each of the areas. Here they are:

AREA I: THE IDEAL SCHOOL

THE MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of any Wayne State associated school is the preparation of all students academically, emotionally, physically and socially to become productive adults in a culturally diverse, rapidly changing, highly technological society.

The school's core belief is that all children can learn, and as such it is obligated to place their education above all other interests, making certain they have qualified, competent instructors who maintain the flexibility to use proven methods and try new initiatives.

This broad-based community effort is also the focal point for the delivery of a series of services to the whole range of citizenry, including those related to health, social services, parent education, day care, pre-school education, after school recreation, cultural events, mental health, family planning, job preparation, adult education and more.

The ultimate goal is to provide a safe environment in which learning and growing can occur, created through collaborative relationships with students, parents, teachers, administrators, university-identified resources and the community.

Through the process of development and implementation of the school's goals, all resources are mobilized in the pursuit of educational excellence. The result is community pride and responsibility for achieving quality education.

THE THIRTY-TWO STEPS

We agreed on thirty-two principles that answered the question: "What is an excellent school?" These principles are the means to accomplish the mission stated above. They are loosely grouped into categories that begin to overlap as the list gets longer. What is important, however, is that each of these recommendations has behavioral/operational implications for teachers, administrators, parents, policy makers and children which must be discovered, explored, deliberated and implemented.

1. The needs of students come first.
2. Outcomes based education is primary with the goal that all students who leave the school have the preparation necessary to function in society at whatever the next step appropriate to their educational or vocational plans.
3. Parent partnerships in the education of their own children is a primary goal of the WSU associated school.
4. Parent skills assistance and education is an important component of the program offered by the school.
5. There is consistent and planned interaction between the school and the community, including people who do not have children in the school.
6. There is a strong community support structure.
7. Teachers at all levels are well-prepared in subject matter as well as in methods of teaching.
8. There is locally controlled, site-based management.
9. The school provides programs for the continuing professional development of its teachers.
10. The school provides adequate time within the school day but outside of class for teachers to prepare their lessons as well as to interact with students and others.
11. This is not a "magnet" or special population school.
12. The school fosters high self-esteem through achievement.
13. The multi-cultural orientation of the school features a curriculum which accurately describes the contributions and achievements of all groups.
14. This school is the center of a comprehensive neighborhood health and social services structure.
15. In serving the local population the school acts as a stabilizing force in the community.
16. This school adheres to all standards and laws of the State of Michigan.
17. All options for students' further education are kept open as long as possible.
18. Appropriate assessment, evaluation and diagnostic tools are used.
19. Career and technical education (*nee* vocational education) is recognized as a legitimate educational path and appropriate opportunities are provided.
20. Special needs education is a part of the school.

21. The school features continuous individual feedback and individual education development and action plans.
22. The school features a coordinated K-12 structure that facilitates readiness all through the "pipeline."
23. The school contains a multi-participant administrative structure, along with a Council which acts as coordinator for physical matters.
24. The school includes mixed-age initiatives.
25. The school is equipped with state of the art high-technology classrooms and equipment which enhances teaching, learning and administrative work. Teachers have been specially trained to maximize utilization of this equipment.
26. The school features an extended day.
27. The school building is available for continuous use.
28. The school features a flexible structure that admits change.
29. The school features a complete commitment to teaching and learning, a seriousness about the educational process and pride in the institution and its results.
30. The resources of Wayne State University, including students, faculty and staff, and the the Cultural Center are maximally utilized by the students, teachers and parents of the school.
31. The university governance structure represented by the President and the Board of Governors has made an ongoing commitment to ensure the continuation of the program.
32. The WSU associated school model is dynamic, and includes appropriate continuous evaluation, documentation of its effectiveness and rearrangement and/or modification where/when necessary.

AREA II:
*THE IDEALLY PREPARED
TEACHER*

The second portion of the report was in response to the request that the Commission consider the nature and format of teacher training at Wayne State University. Of necessity this was translated into a broader set of concerns centering around the "ideally trained" teacher for urban, multi-cultural education and areas of responsibility of a College of Education.

THE MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Wayne State University's teacher education program is to prepare the nation's best teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to teach students in the culturally diverse schools which exist in our rapidly changing, highly technological society. This preparation has as its base a solid liberal arts background and includes a major area of study outside of Education, as well as measured proficiency in subject areas and in how to best teach them to students.

Through a holistic appreciation of students' strengths, respect for their communities and families, and broad skill in determining individual needs and teaching to them, these teachers create an environment conducive to learning, retaining and applying what has been taught.

Finally, Wayne State University's goal is to provide teachers with the ability to practice the profession of teaching and to reflect on their own abilities and methods for the purpose of constant improvement of themselves and others.

EIGHTEEN CHARACTERISTICS OF
AN IDEALLY PREPARED TEACHER

1. The ideally prepared teacher possesses knowledge and has an understanding of her/his subject matter that is considerably deeper than the content that he or she actually teaches.
2. The ideally prepared teacher complements the discipline-based proficiency noted above with a holistic appreciation for, and skill in, working with the individual child's resources and needs.
3. The ideally prepared teacher is technologically literate and aware, especially in his or her own subject area, and uses such knowledge effectively to help students learn better in subject areas.

4. The ideally prepared teacher understands how one's particular subject matter -- most especially in the major area of study -- permeates one's life, and in so understanding is also clear about how that subject matter can be applied in a variety of areas.
5. The ideally prepared teacher has an understanding of the changing demographics of the urban area and its surroundings.
6. The ideally prepared teacher understands and utilizes the rich resources of the urban environment, including its ethnic and cultural diversity.
7. The ideally prepared teacher has had a number of effective role models and/or mentors as a part of his/her education.
8. The ideally prepared teacher has had a number of meaningful teaching experiences in various settings before becoming a "full-fledged" teacher and has passed through a series of decision "moments."
9. The ideally prepared teacher understands the importance of parental involvement in a child's education and has had training in working collaboratively with parents and community members.
10. The ideally prepared teacher has had training in working collaboratively with other professionals including school counselors, administrators, etc., and also including physicians, social workers, and those usually considered outside of the school process.
11. The ideally prepared teacher has had training in team participation for decision-making, management, school improvement, etc.
12. The ideally prepared teacher has passed appropriate standardized examinations in subject matter and pedagogy for entrance to the field.
13. The ideally prepared teacher enjoys, respects and understands children as well as their families and their communities and believes in students' ability to learn.
14. The ideally prepared teacher communicates clearly and effectively.
15. The ideally prepared teacher is able to create and manage an environment conducive to learning.
16. The ideally prepared teacher has an understanding of how students develop and learn and is able to apply that understanding in all aspects of teaching.
17. The ideally prepared teacher knows how to successfully assess student skills and progress for purposes of reporting, program alteration, parent participation and student motivation.
18. The ideally prepared teacher is able to reflect on her/his own practices and understands the need for peer criticism in order to change as appropriate.

In addition to these requirements for teachers, all of which imply curricula for the College of Education, there were several areas of responsibility which the Commission felt any fully realized College of Education takes on in a community of which it is a part. They are:

19. The College of Education sets high standards for its students and its faculty.
20. The College of Education provides opportunities and resources for continuing teacher education in both pedagogical and discipline-related matters.
21. The College of Education provides the integrating framework through which close cooperation with the rest of the university community occurs, and moves students into disciplinary contexts that enrich their general knowledge base.
22. The College of Education provides alternative paths to teacher certification, the graduates of which meet the same criteria for "ideal teacher" as are asked of more traditional graduates.
23. The College of Education provides the integrating framework through which research discoveries are transmitted to its students and to its communities for immediate improvement of pre-K-12 education.
24. The College of Education provides atmosphere, resources and material to continue research efforts into teaching and learning.

*AREA III:
THE COLLABORATIVE
RELATIONSHIP*

The third portion of the report addressed university-school collaborations which involved something short of the total responsibility for a school, the subject of *Area I*. (Although the principles apply equally to *Area I*, they were addressed here as they seemed to apply to more segmented collaborations.) As might be imagined this cut a broad swath across enterprises already being tried and through another set, equal or greater in size, of arrangements that were possible for the future.

The range of complexity was great, as well, and ran from a single undergraduate helping out an elementary school pupil as she learned to play the violin to involvement in so-called Professional Development Schools in which cadres of special teachers, counselors, professors, etc. descend on a school to use it to improve the lives of the students and present and future teachers.

Since there were hundreds of collaborations extant, ranging from teaching techniques improvements to assessment experiments, the question which arose for the Commission centered around how we could address collaboration -- both process and product. (It was in this area that the role of the university's President in the collaboration process became clear.)

As in previous sections, this section began with a mission statement; this one then followed by sixteen points. These were divided into two portions, one with eleven and the other with five points. The first section reflected the *process* that we felt necessary in order to set up any collaborative effort so that it has the best possible chance to succeed. The second dealt with the *characteristics* of successful WSU collaboration(s) once they were set up.

THE MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of a Wayne State University collaboration with pre-K-12 education is to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the university and pre-university level. Enhanced student outcomes resulting from a synergy of administrative, educational and community efforts are the measurable standards for success.

The collaboration is characterized by: 1) joint commitment to excellence, 2) shared vision, 3) provision of resources to each partner by the other, 4) recognition of the unique contributions of all partners, 5) long-term commitment from all parties, and, 6) ongoing evaluations of process and outcomes.

The key result of this process of collaboration is the short and long-range enhancement of teacher education, education of professional and support staff and education of children in the pre-K-12 school.

THE PROCESS OF COLLABORATING

1. In the process of developing a WSU collaborative relationship, all key stakeholders should be equally involved.
2. In the process of developing a WSU collaborative relationship, philosophical support must exist and be verified, or must be built in the community.
3. In the process of developing a WSU collaborative relationship there is formal commitment from the chief executives of the parties and from their associated governing bodies.
4. In the process of developing a WSU collaborative relationship there must be no preconceived or pre-existing plans.
5. In the process of developing a WSU collaborative relationship, achievable outcomes and realistic goals for the collaboration are developed.
6. In the process of developing a WSU collaborative relationship, trust that all partners are working toward a common goal must result in a vision shared by all parties and consensus at all levels that comes from the work, itself.
7. In the process of developing a WSU collaborative relationship, a willingness to understand the necessity for modification and adjustment must be built into the process.
8. In the process of developing a WSU collaborative relationship, training must occur, as necessary.
9. In the process of developing a WSU collaborative relationship, mechanisms for communicating with its constituencies must be developed.
10. In the process of developing a WSU collaborative relationship, the focus must remain on the development and maintenance of educational excellence for the students.
11. In developing a WSU collaborative relationship it is important that the process be replicable.

THE PRODUCT: COLLABORATION

1. The ideal pre-K-12 school and WSU collaboration has a school or schools in which it takes place.

2. The ideal pre-K-12 school and WSU collaboration has a set of guiding principles and a framework within which the collaboration operates.

- a. The collaboration admits change.
- b. The reward structure of the collaboration reflects its work.
- c. Resources are committed by all parties to the partnership.
- d. A comprehensive group from both institutions is involved.
- e. A commitment beyond the collaboration exists to continue to follow the students affected and to provide some access for them to post-secondary education, as appropriate.
- f. University graduate and undergraduate students are involved on both a paid and a volunteer basis.
- g. There is a network for communicating what we learn from both successes and failures.
- h. There is a reciprocal mechanism for each side to learn from the other.
- i. There is a structure to coordinate and facilitate the work.

3. The ideal pre-K-12 school and WSU collaboration is reflective of the diversity of the city and metropolitan area.

4. The ideal pre-K-12 school and WSU collaboration has clearly defined the roles of its various stakeholders.

5. The ideal pre-K-12 school and WSU collaboration improves both the University's teacher education program and the school or children involved.

After this we were in a position to end our fact finding and begin the first action phase of the collaboration process. For that conclusion three questions served to organize our recommendations, and again we quote from the report:

What have we learned?
Where do we go from here?
How do we get there?

The first two questions have been addressed in the context of the first two sections of this document by asking and answering the questions, "What should a Wayne State University associated school be like?" And, "What should an ideally prepared teacher know?" We have also addressed the issue of responsibilities of a College of Education (in this case WSU's College of Education) in the university.

The third question has been addressed as a part of our consideration of the overall process of Wayne State University collaboration and involvement with pre-K-12 education in Detroit.

Below we have digested what the report has already summarized, realizing we are getting dangerously close to oversimplification, and have provided a set of "enabling activities" in each of the areas. It is our feeling that in many cases we are approaching new and complex policy challenges and we hope to do them justice.

I. A Wayne State University associated school will be committed to the education of all children, to the provision and/or coordination of all services necessary for their growth and development and to the enhanced enrichment of their families and communities.

Enabling Activities

When Wayne State establishes its associated school(s):

A. there should be is ongoing and direct involvement of the community, parents and teachers in: a) the administration of the school and the development of its curriculum, b) the selection and development of the scope of services provided and/or coordinated by the schools, and, c) the standards of performance and behavior of students, teachers, parents, administrators and other participating agencies or individuals;

B. the community school model in which the school is the center of a comprehensive system of neighborhood health and human services should be adopted;

C. curricula should be established, necessary instructional resources secured and a system of student, teacher and school evaluation developed, all of which are based on an "outcomes" model in which children attain the skills necessary to proceed with their educational and vocational plans;

D. programs and policies should be established to assure parents' participation in their childrens' education, to foster their childrens' growth and development, and to enrich their understanding and skills in addressing issues in their childrens' lives; and

E. opportunities for direct use of Wayne State University's facilities and resources by students, parents, teachers and community members should be reviewed and developed.

II. Teachers prepared by Wayne State University's College of Education will possess: a) knowledge and proficiency in their subject matter; b) pedagogical skills enriched by enhanced

supervised teaching experiences, including the ability to support students in an outcomes based model of curriculum construction and evaluation; c) holistic appreciation of the resources and needs of their students, families and communities; and, d) ability to work with and in an empowered school which employs the community school model.

Enabling Activities

The College of Education should:

- A. establish as a requirement for graduation from the College and certification a high level of performance on a set of standardized examinations and/or other criteria in basic skills (writing, reading, computation) as well as in a student's undergraduate major and allied fields;
- B. establish procedures to advance and measures to assess a student's pedagogical skills as a criterion for graduation/certification, including a pre- and post-graduation mentor system which will develop the student's skills in self-monitoring and continuous advancement of content and pedagogical skills;
- C. establish and/or coordinate training such that a student teacher is able to attain a holistic appreciation and understanding of student, family and community resources and needs;
- D. establish and/or coordinate training such that a student is able to design instruction and teach within an outcomes based curriculum, to assess and coordinate student needs with the community school model and to participate in the ongoing reassessment and growth of an empowered school;
- E. create and facilitate opportunities for alternative paths to teacher certification for individuals possessing non-traditional preparation and/or experience; and
- F. review ongoing research activities within the College of Education and include new emphases in services for advancement of teacher training, documentation of university students' attainment of pedagogical objectives, assistance with applied research and provision of the results of research to the city's classrooms as quickly as possible.

III. Wayne State University should collaborate with students, parents, teachers, school administrators, community members and agencies to improve the quality of teaching and learning in pre-K-12 schools and in teacher education in the University.

Enabling Activities

- A. Wayne State should become a partner in an ongoing, broad-based coalition reflecting the ethnic, religious, racial and economic diversity of Detroit and which includes representatives from the University, students, parent, teachers, school administrators and community members and agencies and which will address the education of pre-K-12 students and their teachers.
- B. The coalition should come to consensus regarding expectations for students, the role of the school within its community and the role of Wayne State University, and the College of Education, in particular with regard to pre-K-12 education.
- C. Tangible, formal long-term commitments should be made to this collaboration by the University, the participating school(s), the school(s)' administration(s); community representatives, teachers, parents and students.
- D. A means should be established by which the coalition can identify and disseminate its principles of collaboration, document its processes and outcomes and commit resources to its objectives.
- E. Collaborations within the University should be established to enhance the training of teachers and to contribute to learning in the participating school(s).

It is the vision of this Commission that thoughtful, structured efforts will be started which will address and put into operation the principles in this report. While the addition of a permanent dean for the College of Education will provide needed leadership in these areas, the establishment of a number of task forces to begin to structure action seems appropriate, particularly given the lead times necessary to make many of these complex ideas into reality.

Now on to the third thing that was promised for discussion and from which this paper takes its title: text and subtext. What does this mean and why is it important?

In the theatre (the author's business) the real analysis of any piece of dramatic literature that needs to be performed centers around what is called "subtext" -- the text underneath the spoken word. Most important, it is sometimes called the "real" intention. This is not the mythical symbolic level of literature that we all learn in agony where water on the beach symbolizes purity and the fluidity of society's definition of it (or something like that), it is much more real, much more gritty, and much more useful.

Subtext is what we in the audience *know* is going on when two teenagers are sitting on a swing on a late summer night, birds chirping, and they begin to talk quietly about anything.

BOBBY

Geee this old swing is squeaky, huh?

SUSIE

Yeah.

(Long pause.)

BOBBY

Really squeaky, huh?

SUSIE

My dad says there's too much rust on the chain to oil it. Y'know?

BOBBY

Yeah. Rust. Whew!

(THEY SUDDENLY EMBRACE AND BEGIN TO KISS
PASSIONATELY. JUST AS SUDDENLY THE PORCH LIGHT GOES
ON AND SUSIE'S DAD'S VOICE COMES FROM THE HOUSE.)

DAD'S VOICE

There's lemonade in here for anybody who is thirsty!

It's not too hard to see that, as old-fashioned as this sounds, if you miss the subtext you're in big trouble. The nice thing, though, is that if you are alive and breathing you won't miss it, and for Bobby and Susie and Dad, they all get to avoid talking directly about what is really going on. The other nice thing is that this avoidance doesn't slow up the action one little bit just as not identifying what is going on directly doesn't make it any less real.

One of the ways in which the parties to this collaboration process protected themselves is to agree on surface text that had a variety of subtextual meanings and levels of meaning. This paper won't explicate them all, but comment on a couple could prove enlightening because it means that if handled properly the system can change to benefit the children (*find that water, for goodness sake!*) without the confrontation that prevents the matters of real substance from being addressed.

Let's look at a couple of the recommendations from this report and decode them in such a way that we can see the document as a political as well as technical piece of work (needing a literary level of analysis). For example, item number two in section one, above: "Outcomes based education is primary with the goal that all students who leave the school have the preparation necessary to function in society at whatever the next step appropriate to their educational or vocational plans. "

While this explicitly pays homage to the need for students to know more, in the discussion of the item not included here, and most important in the *subtext* of the item there is included the following ideas: 1) this school takes *responsibility* for reaching stated outcomes; 2) there will be a revision in classroom procedures to alter time on task such that students can master needed material; 3) additional help may have to be employed to take varying abilities into account and provide additional attention; 4) standardized tests and national standards will be adopted, 5) additional work will be put into maximizing the future for each child, which may mean providing opportunities not currently available --- and more. Explicitly stated at the end of this item is that high standards will drive the outcomes that we are looking for, and that is an important commitment, as well, which contextualizes the abstract language that appears earlier.

It may be in the best interests of the reader's patience that this paper not go on much longer, but it is important to see some more subtext decoded -- at least enough to know that at this critical stage a broadly diverse body is ready to stand behind some important changes. The cat is out of the bag to this extent: discussion by members of participating groups is unquestionably endorsed and underway, and that means we are proceeding to the next stage.

Here are some more examples taken from the earlier lists. It is important to bear in mind that this is not all out of thin air -- there were "discussions" with each item where what has been identified as subtext was implicit in ways that might not be clear from this abbreviated look.

TEXT: "Parent partnerships in the education of their own children is a *primary goal* [new italics] of the WSU associated school."

SUBTEXT: There needs to be active parent participation, even to the extent that "surrogate parents" will be found so that *the parent-child relationship exists for every child* in the school. There will be adult extra-school involvement.

TEXT: "Parent skills assistance and education is an important component of the program offered by the school."

SUBTEXT: The school *is responsible* for parent workshops and training, and more important, *parents* will subsequently be *responsible for carrying on this activity* or their student may not be allowed to continue.

TEXT: "There is consistent and planned interaction between the school and the community, including people who do not have children in the school. And,

"There is a strong community support structure."

SUBTEXT: An extended community support structure means broadening the base of participation, the implication being a period of extra work for faculty and administration.

TEXT: "Teachers at all levels are well-prepared in subject matter as well as in methods of teaching."

SUBTEXT: Teachers who are not not prepared in content and delivery will not be retained, and methods will be developed to determine this on an ongoing basis.

TEXT: "There is locally controlled, site-based management."

SUBTEXT: Management, including bottom line responsibility, must occur at the school. This is an empowered school with all that that status implies, including responsibility for results.

Just a couple more at random from the report:

TEXT: "This school is the center of a comprehensive neighborhood health and social services structure. And,

"In serving the local population the school acts as a stabilizing force in the community."

SUBTEXT: There is a new, broad responsibility for the neighborhood resting, at least in part, with the school structure. That being the case, the University which *is* the school is talking on a comprehensive health, social services and education mission.

TEXT: "The school is equipped with state of the art high-technology classrooms and equipment which enhances teaching, learning and administrative work. Teachers have been specially trained to maximize utilization of this equipment."

SUBTEXT: High tech equipment at appropriate levels is not an option but a necessity, and teachers who are unable to use it will not be able to work here.

TEXT: "The resources of Wayne State University, including students, faculty and staff, and the the Cultural Center are maximally utilized by the students, teachers and parents of the school. And,

"The university governance structure represented by the President and the Board of Governors has made an ongoing commitment to ensure the continuation of the program."

SUBTEXT: The University will change its reward, recognition, retention and other structures to accommodate the people from all areas who work with the school and to accommodate the inclusion of this level of education in its mission.

It is probably best to stop here and add a note of caution. That is this: even though the seeds of these ideas, and perhaps the ideas themselves, may be in the subtext, pulling them out is a delicate matter and must be done step-by-step. Just as with Bobby and Susie, we are foolish not to decode the possibilities and act -- with tact, like Dad -- on them. And just as Dad did not shout "Get your grubby hands off my daughter, you pipsqueak pervert!" and ruin it all, we now see that we can proceed gently, understanding what is going on and moving wisely to change as we know we must.

CODA:

THE PRESIDENT'S INVOLVEMENT

What about the role of the Wayne State President in this saga? What was it? What should it have been? And is it some kind of model that might be used elsewhere?

In forming the Commission, the President signalled his readiness to take on this task. The Commission was in a position, as can be seen from what has come earlier, of making recommendations about principles to be operationalized as the collaborative effort took place. This is an enviable spot for the group, but is not always an ideal model. Depending on the local situation, some presidents may just want to know if this is a good idea for their institution. Others may have other agendas. But this president was clear in his charge to the Commission, saying in the firmest terms that "No greater challenge faces our nation today than the education of our people. . . . [But] . . . this nation's public elementary and secondary schools are among the worst in the developed world. . . Wayne State is at a critical point in our relationship with . . . the Detroit schools . . . [so] I am establishing a . . . Commission . . . to consider a broad array of issues and formulate a mission statement for the entire University's commitment to our public schools."

The charge goes on to ask for action in five areas, later pared down to the three mentioned previously, and he explicitly states that "The commission's charge will be to develop a mission statement, but not a detailed plan." He concludes this statement, which was made to the Board of Governors on October 25, 1991, by saying, "I know of no other initiative that is so important in this community or so central to the mission of Wayne State University."

As a consequence the Commission's thinking was at a high level.

What should it have been? In this model, for this university, the way this effort was constructed was the only way to proceed. A College of Education with an Interim Dean and a 186,000-student school district under fire and with a General Superintendent with a tenure of under six months provided a backdrop for leadership that only the President of the city's major institution of higher education could take.

Is this a model that might be repeated? It might be, but it does not need to be. There will be situations in which a group assembled from a coalition of community forces will suggest from the bottom up an idea for collaboration, and there will be others that will be generated from the public schools, themselves.

What is important, however, no matter what the model, is that the collaboration proceed as suggested by Section III of the report, above, or it will not be implementable. The beginning impetus is one thing, the day-to-day work is quite another.

And what is important for a President, no matter how the effort has started, is to read the subtext, take a little time and to worry more about accomplishing the goal than about *looking like* he or she is accomplishing it. In the case of Wayne State a politically astute President with his priorities in the right place will hopefully mean that before we know it, Dad, Bobby and Susie will all be settling down to lemonade in the kitchen -- if we're very lucky. ~

* * * * *

So, back at Well #1 they know things haven't been going so terrific, and so do they at Well #2. Now this *new group* wants to dig their own well, Well #3, and they have put together a set of recommendations saying exactly what that should be like. In fact the new recommendations even take on a part of the process of well-digging as practiced at Well #1, for these many years. Buried in the recommendations is recognition by the people from the first two wells that this might even be a good idea, although they have hesitated to say so outright for fear of seeming disloyal.

And now the mayor is in a position to appoint yet another group, this time with even broader representation, to implement the recommendations. If she can make it clear that the adoption of this effort makes heroes out of the folks at #1 and #2, the new implementation body will have little trouble uncovering the favorable recommendations. On the other hand, if the mayor says that those who were in the #3 group have proved that their colleagues either hadn't been working as hard as they might or that they have been simply wrong-headed all this time, the prospect of finding water even at the new location is not rosy.

And remember -- that water is what it's all about.